585

Then comes the feast. A suckling pig, a hen, a cock, two bowls of cooked rice, two hardboiled eggs, two small jars containing brandy, a handful of cotton threads and lighted wax candles are placed on a copper platter before a kind of altar erected in the middle of the house. In certain parts of Laos cakes and flowers take the place of these offerings, except for the rice, eggs, candles and cotton thread. These latter are obligatory, according to Laotian custom.

[193] The bride and groom kneel down before the altar, and the marriage ceremony begins. An elderly man, a sorcerer, or the man who has been the go-between in the marriage recites prayers and performs certain ritual practices. Then he attaches cotton threads to the wrists of the bride and groom so as to form bracelets. These are supposed to be "fetishes of happiness." Finally the newlyweds pour out a libation of brandy and all those present drink from the same cup after them, passing it from hand to hand.

In families of notables the bride's parents give back part of the dowry to their son-in-law after he has given it to them, as a mark of esteem and great confidence.

591

If the son-in-law is to live with the bride's parents then the dowry is decreased in accordance with custom, in compensation for the labor which he will furnish to the community (1).

(1) A custom which is quite widely observed decrees that the groom shall live with his in-laws and help them with their work like a son until the time when he has a child. He is then free to go elsewhere and found a new family home. This custom is extremely ancient in origin and contributes greatly to strengthening the bonds of kinship between the groom and his in-laws.

There are cases, however, where the groom already has a house and takes his wife to live there after the marriage ceremony. The newlyweds are then accompanied by their friends. The young men take along noisy instruments with which they make a great racket, while the young women carry the bride's clothes and bedclothes to her new home.

When they reach their home a celebration takes place in which there is no shortage of brandy and during which the bride runs and shuts herself in her room so as to escape the extremely licentious remarks made by those present, who are somewhat drunk after their many libations.

[522 273]

149: Reinach--175 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8
Tribal Tai 341

Building materials, interior arrangement and furniture in Thai houses do not differ in any significant way from what we have described in connection with the Laotians.

Births. Like the Laotian women, Thai women generally give birth to children with the greatest ease, and the ceremonies accompanying births are identical. 844

Marriages. Betrothals generally take place among the Thais after the farming work is over, in December or January, during the cold season. Sheds are built in the villages. Fires are laid there and the marriageable girls install themselves there with a spinning wheel, reel or cotton gin to keep them busy and prevent them from losing countenance. The young men come and join them and exchange declarations, compliments, betel quids and cigarettes with them. There it is that promises of marriage are made, which are followed by a request to the girl's parents when she gives her lover permission to do so. 584

A few days later, during a banquet which takes place in the girl's house, the engagement is announced and the young [236] people are then free to see one another and come and go together at all hours and in all places.

The marriage is not celebrated until several months after the betrothal unless traces of pregnancy are evident in the engaged girl, in which case the marriage takes place at once.

The ceremony is much simpler than among the Laotians, but it is followed by a series of banquets which succeed one another for several days and at which great quantities of rice brandy and rice beer are consumed. 585

The groom comes to live in his wife's room on his wedding day. He is supposed to stay in the home of his in-laws for eight years (only three years in some regions) and share in their work. 591

Adultery. Divorce. "Cases of adultery are extremely rare. When such an eventuality does occur, the man is condemned to a fine of seven bars of silver (about 260 francs) and the woman to a fine of six bars of the same metal (about 225 francs). Half of these sums is awarded to the judges and the other half to the husband, who may then either take back or repudiate his unfaithful wife. 586 684

"In the latter case, the unfaithful wife generally marries her accomplice.

"Divorce is rarer, but just as easy among the Thai as among 586

10: d'Orleans--276 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 563, 583, 591, 764, 793 Ethnic subgroups

"Marriages are easily made amongst the Khamouks; the young man's parents give sixty rupees to the girl's father and mother. After the marriage feast, the bridegroom sleeps one night in his father-in-law's house, then takes his wife home with him.

The dead are buried and not burnt; there is no priest, no religious ceremonies, but the master of the house cuts a fowl's throat and the mourners rub their knees with his blood. The men generally follow one stage in the bonzeries. (1) After a few months

1. I question whether this information does not apply more to the Laotians.

they are little bonze or Siang, then grand bonze or Tit ; a man who has not made one stage is Ba."

10: d'Orleans--319 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 563, 583, 591, 764 Ethnic subgroups

[LSS: Among the Meo of Luang Prabang] "The marriages are arranged by the parents, a young girl being rated at 36 rupees and taken, as soon as she is married, to the house of her husband. The bodies of the defunct are interred three days after death."